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SYNOPSIS.

After stealing the amber jewels and the Haysman war plane in London Michael Lanyard returns to Troyon's, a Parisian, for the first time in many years because he thinks Roddy is a Scotland Yard man, on his trail. Lanyard dresses and goes out, leaving Roddy waiting in the next room, then comes back stealthily, to find in his room Mlle. Bannion. In the apartment near the Trocadero he finds an invitation from The Pack to the Lone Wolf to join them. Lanyard attempts to discuss the matter with Mlle. Bannion, but she forbids the buyers to deal with him. He meets The Pack, but refuses alliance with them. On his return to his room he is attacked in the dark, but knocks out his assailant. He discovers that Roddy has been murdered in his bed and starts to leave the house. In the corridor he encounters Lucia Hannon, who insists on leaving with him. Having no money Lucia is obliged to take refuge with Lanyard in the studio of an absent artist friend of his. He locks her in a room alone. After sleep Lanyard finds his viewpoint changed. He tells Lucia who he is. Mutual confessions follow. She is Lucy Shannon, not Bannion, and has been used as a tool by Bannion, the crook. The American murderer of Roddy was Bannion's secretary. Lucy agrees to go with him to return the London loot. A newspaper wrapped in a brick is thrown through the skylight. The paper has an account of the total destruction by fire of Troyon's. They go to Mlle. Ombre's Paris residence, burglariously restore the jewels, then to the home of M. Drocroy, minister of war, to return the Haysman plane in return for safe conduct out of France. On coming out Lanyard finds Lucy gone. Lanyard turns taxi chauffeur.

CHAPTER XXIII—Continued.

There was sufficient light to enable him to see clearly the face of the passenger—its pale oval and the eyes whose gaze clung to his with an effect of confused fascination.

She sat quite motionless until one white-gloved hand moved uncertainly toward her bosom.

That brought him to; unconsciously lifting his cap, he stepped back a pace and started to move on.

But at that she bent quickly forward and unlatched the door. It swung wide to him.

Hardly knowing what he was doing, he accepted the mute invitation, stepped into the cab, took the empty seat beside her, and closed the door.

Almost at once the block was lifted, and the car moved on with a jerk, the girl sinking back into her corner with a suggestion of breathlessness, as though the effort she made to seem composed had been almost too much for her strength.

Her face, turned to Lanyard in the half-light, appeared immobile, expressionless; only her eyes were alert with anticipation. But she said nothing.

On his part, Lanyard felt himself hopelessly confounded, in the grasp of emotions that would scarcely suffer him to speak. A great wonder obsessed his mind that she should have opened the door to him no less than that she should have entered through it. Dimly he understood that both had acted without premeditation, and he asked himself: "Was she already regretting that momentary weakness—or whatever it had been?"

"Why did you do that?" he heard himself demand abruptly, and felt that his voice sounded harsh, strained, unnatural.

She stiffened slightly, with a nervous movement of her shoulders.

"Because I saw you."

"Did you want to talk to me, perhaps?" he prompted.

"I was surprised; I had hoped—believe—what you had left Paris."

She surveyed his costume with a curious glance, perplexed.

"Why are you dressed that way? Is it a disguise?"

"A pretty good one—as a matter of fact, the national costume of one in my present station in life."

"But you are wrong. I recognized you instantly, didn't I? And those others—they're as keen-witted as I—certainly! Oh, you should not have stopped in Paris!"

"I couldn't go without knowing what had become of you."

"It was afraid of that," she confessed. "Then why—"

"Oh, I know what you're going to say! Why did I run away from you? Then, since he said nothing, she continued unhappily: "I can't tell you. I mean, I don't know how to tell you!"

She kept her face averted, sat gazing blankly out of the window; but when he remained mute and unresponsive—in point of fact not knowing what to say—she turned to look inquiringly at him, and the glare of a passing lamp showed him her countenance profoundly distressed, her mouth tense, brows knitted, eyes clouded with perplexity and appeal.

And of a sudden, seeing her so tormented and so piteous, his indignation ebbed, and with it all his doubts of her; dimly he divined that there was something behind this dark fabric of mystery and inconsistency that, however inexplicable it might seem to him, excused all her apparent faithlessness and instability of character and purpose. He couldn't look upon this girl and listen to her voice and believe that she wasn't at heart as sound and sweet and tender and loyal as any that ever breathed!

A wave of tenderness and compassion swept his heart, and he realized that he didn't matter, that nothing mattered so long as she was spared one slightest pang of self-reproach.

He said very gently: "I wouldn't have you distress yourself on my account. Miss Shannon, I quite understand there must be things I can't understand—that you must have had your reasons for acting as you did."

"Yes," she said evenly, but again with eyes averted: "I had; but they're not easy—they're impossible to explain to you."

own, so dull and hollow was it in his hearing—"I can only think one thing."

"Think what you must," she said lifelessly; "it doesn't matter, so long as you renounce me and put me out of your heart and—leave me."

Without other response he leaned forward and tapped the glass, signaling the driver to stop. And as the cab swerved sharply in toward the curb he laid hold of the door-latch.

"Lucy," he pleaded, "don't let me go believing—"

She seemed suddenly infused with a cold, implacable hostility.

"I tell you," she said cruelly, "I don't care what you think, so long as you go!"

The face she now showed him was ashen, his mouth was hard, her eyes blazed feverishly.

And then, as still he hesitated, the cab pulled up, and the driver, leaning back, unlatched the door and threw it open.

With a curt, resigned inclination of the head Lanyard rose and got out.

Immediately the girl grasped the speaking-tube, the door slammed, the cab drew away, and left him standing with the pose, the gesture of one who has just heard sentence of death pronounced on him.

When he roused to know his surroundings he found himself standing on a corner of the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne.

It was bitter cold in the wind sweeping down from the west, and it had grown very dark. Only in the sky above the Bois a long reef of crimson

light hung motionless, against which the leafless trees of the avenue lifted their gnarled, weird silhouettes.

While he watched the crimson ebbed swiftly and gave way to mauve, to violet, to black.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Apostate.

When there was no more light in the sky a profound sigh escaped Lanyard's lips, and with a slight nod toward the place where the light had been, and the gesture of one who recognizes and signifies submission to an omens, he turned and tramped heavily back across town.

At one stage of his journey he turned aside and, more through habit than desire or design, entered a cheap eating-place and consumed his evening meal.

But he received no such order; there was a pause; then he heard one of the men cough heavily, and in a twinkling Lanyard had stiffened to rigidity in his seat. If he had heard that cough but once before, that once had been too often. Without a glance askance, hardening his features to absolute immobility, he knew that the cough was shaking the slighter of those two figures.

And of a sudden he was acutely conscious of the clearness of the

ning meal without the slightest comprehension of what he ate or whether the food were good or poor.

When he had finished he fled the place like a haunted man.

Quite without purpose he sought the machine shop where he had left his car.

He had no plans; but it was in his mind, a murderous thought, that before another day dawned he might come face to face with Bannion.

Meanwhile he would go to work. He could think out his problems while driving his cab as well as in seclusion; and whatever he ultimately decided to do, he could accomplish little before midnight; finally, it was quite within the bounds of possibility that his car would prove a valuable asset to whatever course of action he might elect to pursue.

Toward seven o'clock, with his machine in perfect running order, he mounted to the seat and took to the streets in reckless humor—the temper of a beast of prey.

The barrier was down—once more the Lone Wolf was on the prowl.

But for the present he controlled himself and acted perfectly his temporary role of taxi-hand, fellow to those thousand that infest Paris. People hailed him from sidewalks and restaurants half a dozen times in the course of the next three hours; he took them up, carried them to their several destinations, received payment, and acknowledged their gratuities with perfunctory thanks—all thoroughly in character and all with little conscious thought.

He saw but one thing, the face of Lucy Shannon, white, tense, glimmering wanly in shadows—the face with which she had dismissed him.

He had but one thought—the desire to read the riddle of her bondage. To accomplish this he was prepared to go to any extreme; if Bannion and his crew came between him and his purpose, so much the worse for them—and, incidentally, so much the better for society! What might happen to himself was of no moment.

He entertained but one design, to become again what he had been, the supreme adventurer, the prince of plunderers, to lose himself once more in the suspense of adventurous days and the delirium of perihuman nights, to reincarnate the Lone Wolf and in his guise loot the world anew—to court oblivion even at the prison's gates.

It was after ten when, cruising purposelessly, without a fare, he swung through the Rue Aubert into the Place de l'Opera, and approaching the Cafe de la Paix, was hailed by a doorman of that restaurant.

Drawing in to the curb with the indifference that had distinguished his every action of the evening, he waited with a throbbing motor and mind detached and gaze remote from the tides of foot and wheeled traffic brawling past on either hand.

After a moment two figures, both masculine, issued from the revolving door of the cafe and approached the cab. Lanyard paid them no attention. In his preoccupation he would have needed only the repetition of an address in his ear and the noise of the cab door slammed to send him off like a shot.

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CHAPTER XXV.

A Surprise.

He had gone but a block when the window at his back was lowered and his fare observed pleasantly:

"That you, Lanyard?"

The adventurer hesitated an instant; then, without looking round, responded:

"Wertheimer, eh?"

"Right! The old man had me puzzled for a minute with his silly chaffing. Stupid of me, too, because we'd just been talking about you."

"Had you, though?"

"Rather. Hadn't you better take me where we can have a quiet little talk?"

"I'm not conscious of the necessity—"

"Oh, I say!" Wertheimer protested amiably. "Don't be so rotten shifty, old top. Give a chap a chance. Besides, I received today a bit of news from Antwerp I guarantee will interest you."

"Antwerp?" Lanyard repeated, mystified.

"Antwerp—where the ships sail from," Wertheimer laughed—"not Amsterdam, where the diamonds foregather as you may know."

"I don't follow you, I'm afraid."

"I shan't elucidate until we're under cover."

With brief hesitation Lanyard said more placably: "All right. But where shall I take you?"

"Any quiet cafe will do. You can readily find one—"

"Thanks—no," Lanyard objected dryly. "If I must confabulate with gentlemen of your kidney, I prefer to do it under cover. Even dressed as I am, I might be recognized, you know."

But it was evident that Wertheimer didn't mean to permit himself to be

ruined atmosphere, of the merciless glare of electricity beating upon him from every side. And poignantly he regretted neglecting to mask himself with his goggles.

He wasn't left long in suspense. The coughing died away by spasms, followed by the unmistakably sonorous accents of Bannion's voice.

"Well, dear boy! I have to thank you for an excellent dinner and a most interesting evening. Pity to break it up so early. Still, business—you know! Sorry you're not going my way—but that's a good-looking taxi you've drawn. What's its number—eh?"

"Haven't the faintest notion," a British voice drawled in response. "Never bother about a taxi's number until it has run over me."

"Great mistake," Bannion rejoined cheerfully. "Always take your taxi's number before entering. Then, if anything happens—However, that's a good-looking chap at the wheel—doesn't look as if he'd run you into any trouble."

"Oh, if fancy not," said the Englishman, bored.

"Still, you never can tell. There's the number on the lamp. Make a note of it and be on the safe side. Or trust me—I never forget numbers!"

With this speech Bannion ranged alongside Lanyard and looked him over, keenly malicious enjoyment gleaming in his old eyes.

"You are an honest-looking chap," he commended with a suspicion of a mocking smile, but in a tone of the most inoffensive admiration—"honest and—ah—what shall I say?—what's the word we're all using nowadays?—efficient! Honest and efficient-looking, capable of better things, or I'm no judge! Forgive an old man's candor, my friend—and take good care of our British cousin here. He doesn't know his way around Paris very well. Still I feel confident he'll come to no harm in your company. Here's a franc for you."

With matchless effrontery he produced a coin from the change pocket of his fur-lined coat and offered it to Lanyard.

Unhesitatingly, permitting no expression to color his features, Lanyard extended his palm, received the coin, dropped it into his own pocket, and carried two fingers to the vizard of his cap.

"Merci, monsieur," he said evenly.

"Ah, that's the right spirit!" the deep voice jeered. "Never be above your station, my man—never hesitate to take a tip! Here, I'll give you another, gratis—get out of this business; you're too good for it. Don't ask me how I know; I can tell by your face. Hello! Why, you're turning down the flag? You haven't started yet!"

"Conversation goes up on the clock," Lanyard replied stolidly in French. He turned and faced Bannion squarely, loosing a glance of venomous hatred into the other's eyes. "The longer I have to stop here listening to your senile monologue," he added with unmistakable meaning, "the more you'll have to pay. What address, please?"

He added, turning back to get a glimpse of his passenger.

"Hotel Astoria," the porter supplied. "Very good."

The porter closed the door. "But remember my advice," Bannion counseled coolly, stepping back and waving his hand to the man in the cab. "Good night."

Without noticing him further, Lanyard took his car smartly away from the curb, wheeled round the corner into the Boulevard des Capucines, and made toward the Rue Royale.

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"Any quiet cafe will do. You can readily find one—"

"I fancy you're right," Lanyard said

carelessly, following, as Wertheimer turned up the lights, into a modest salon, cozily furnished. "You live here alone, I understand?"

"Quite—make yourself perfectly at ease; nobody can hear us. And," the Englishman added with a laugh, "do sit down—take that chair there, which commands both doors, if you don't trust me."

"Do you think I ought to?"

"Hardly. Otherwise I'd ask you to take my word that you're safe for the time being. As it is, I shan't be offended if you keep your gun handy and your sense of self-preservation running under forced draft. But you won't refuse to join me in a whisky-and-soda?"

"No," said Lanyard slowly—"not if we drink from the same bottle."

Again the Englishman laughed unaffectedly, as, turning to a side-table, he fetched a decanter, glasses, bottled soda, a box of cigarettes, and placed them on a stand within Lanyard's reach.

With all the ease and courtesy of a practiced host he measured whisky into Lanyard's glass till checked by a quiet "Thank you," and helping himself generously, opened the soda.

"I'll not ask you to drink with me," he said with a twinkle, "but—chinchin!" and tilting his glass, half emptied it at a draft.

Muttering formally, at a disadvantage and resenting it, Lanyard drank with less enthusiasm, if without misgivings.

Wertheimer selected a cigarette and lighted it at leisure.

"Well," he said, smiling through a cloud of smoke, "I think we're fairly on our way to an understanding, considering that you told me to go to hell when last we met!"

His spirit was irresistible. In spite of himself Lanyard returned the smile. "I never knew a man to take it with better grace," he said, lighting his own cigarette.

"Resent it! I liked it—you gave us precisely what we asked for."

"Then," demanded Lanyard gravely, "if that's your viewpoint, if you're decent enough to see it that way—that the devil are you doing in that gallery?"

"Mischievous makes strange bedfellows, you'll admit. And if you think that a fair question, what are you doing here, with me?"

"Same excuse as in the other instance—trying to find out what your game is."

Wertheimer chuckled and eyed the ceiling with an intimate grin. "My dear fellow," he protested—"all you want to know is everything!"

"More or less," Lanyard admitted gracefully. "One infers you contemplate stopping this side of the channel for some time."

"Meaning your impression is I made it too hot for me?" Wertheimer interpreted with a quizzical glance. "I shan't tell about that. But I'm hoping to be able to run home for an occasional week-end without stirring up trouble. Why not go along with me some time?"

Lanyard shook his head.

"Come!" the Englishman rallied him. "Don't put on so much side. I'm not bad company. Why not be sociable,

since we're bound to be thrown together more or less in the way of business?"

"Oh, I think not."

"But, my dear chap, you can't go on this way. Playing Parisian taxi-hand is hardly your shop. And, of course, you understand you won't be permitted to engage in any more remunerative pursuit until you make terms with the powers that be—or leave Paris."

"Mr. Wertheimer," Lanyard informed him quietly, "none of you will stop me, if ever I make up my mind to take the field again."

"You haven't been thinking of quitting it—what?" Wertheimer demanded innocently, opening his eyes wide.

"Well, what do you think?"

"I think this conference doesn't get anywhere in particular. Our simple, trusting natures don't seem to fraternize as spontaneously as they might. We may as well cut the sparring and get down to business—don't you think? But before we do, I'd like permission to offer one word of friendly advice."

"And that is—"

"Ware Bannion!" Lanyard nodded. "Thanks," he said.

"I say that in all earnestness," Wertheimer declared. "God knows you've nothing to me, but at least you've played the game like a man; and I won't see you butchered to make an Apache holiday for want of warning."

"Please stop there!" Lanyard interrupted hotly. "I was beginning to like you, too. But you persist in reminding me you're hand and glove with the brute who had Roddy slaughtered in his sleep."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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